

Ibn-e-Insha

Ilm badi daulat hai

Education is Big Business

Knowledge is wealth
To learn how to gain it
Teach it
Put a price on it
Earn this wealth
Lots of it, in fact
Start a school
Fix fees for everything
20 for dispensing education
30 for the bus
40 for uniforms
Sports? That's an extra
So are art and music
Picnics don't come free either
Never mind screeching parents
Just focus on the returns
The wealth you have earned
Should start more schools
More schools equal more fees
You're still young, go on drawing
from this well, until it feels like
the Ganga-Jamuna have flowed
into your coffers

Study's the thing, you know
So don't, on any account
Neglect your studies
Study the account ledger
Study the telephone directory
Memorize mobile numbers
Read your bank statements
Read the matrimonial ads
But remember, never ever
read anything else
Especially be careful
Not to read Mir
Or Ghalib
Avoid Iqbal and Faiz.
Don't read Ibn-e-Insha either
Or you'll never make it up the
ladder
And then
None of us
Will be responsible
for that 'result'

Ibn-e-Insha was a renowned Pakistani poet. His poem, Ilm badi daulat hai, was written in 1970 and continues today, to be a scathing attack on the commodification of learning.

[Translation, Lina Krishnan]